

Missouri's Sturgeons

illustrations by Rebecca Haefner

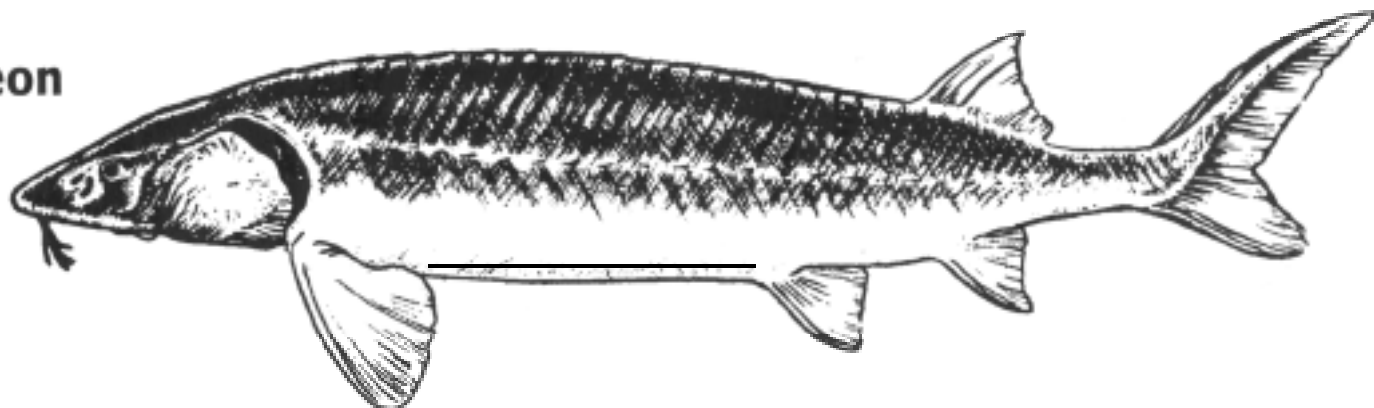
The shovelnose sturgeon is common in our big rivers, but two other species are rare and considered **endangered**. These two species, the **lake sturgeon** and **pallid sturgeon**, are protected and must be returned to the water unharmed if captured. **Biologists are studying these fish and they need information and sightings you** have on them. This leaflet is intended to assist anglers in distinguishing **between** the shovelnose sturgeon, which is not protected, and the two endangered sturgeons, which are protected.

- **Lake Sturgeon** (also known as rubberrnose sturgeon or dogface sturgeon) is the largest of the three species. Most lake sturgeons caught in

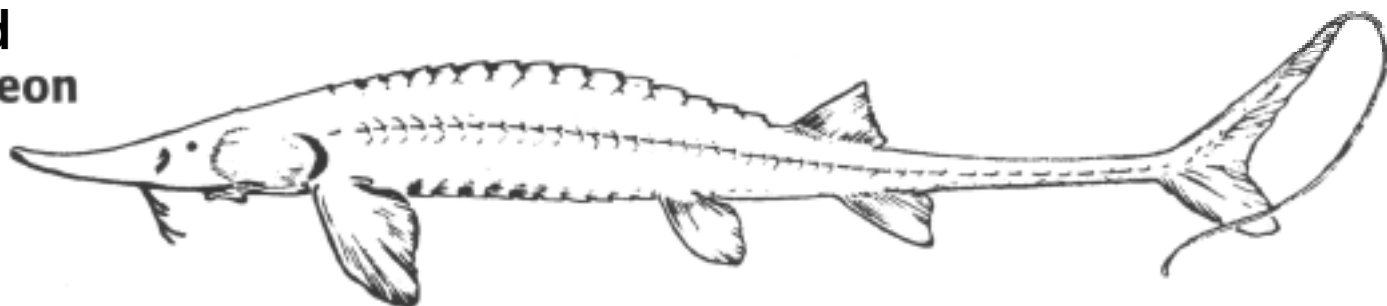
Missouri weigh 30 pounds or more. This species is found in the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, but is rare. Identifying characteristics are its cone-shaped snout, only 2 lobes on the lower lip, and the barbels not fringed. It lacks the long slender filament on the tail fin which may be found in the other two species.

The two species of river sturgeon (pallid sturgeon and shovelnose sturgeon) are similar in appearance. River sturgeons can be separated from the lake sturgeon by the shovelnose snout, 4 lobes on the lower lip, and the fringed barbels. River sturgeons often have a long, slender filament on the tail fin, but this filament may be broken off in some individuals.

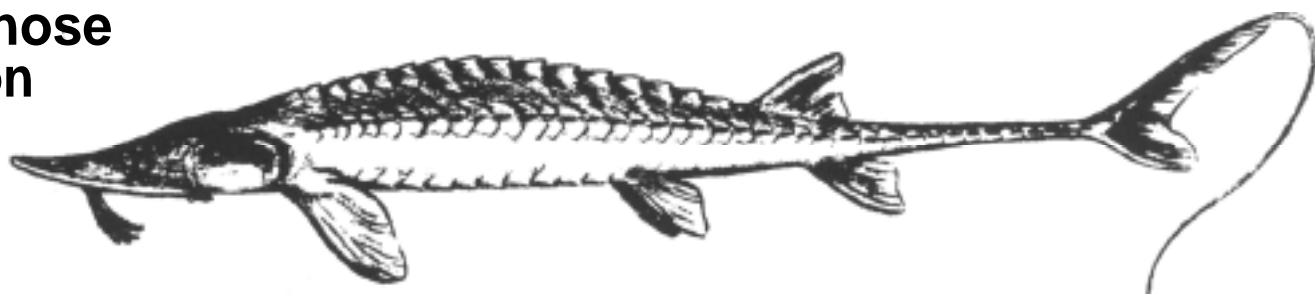
Lake Sturgeon



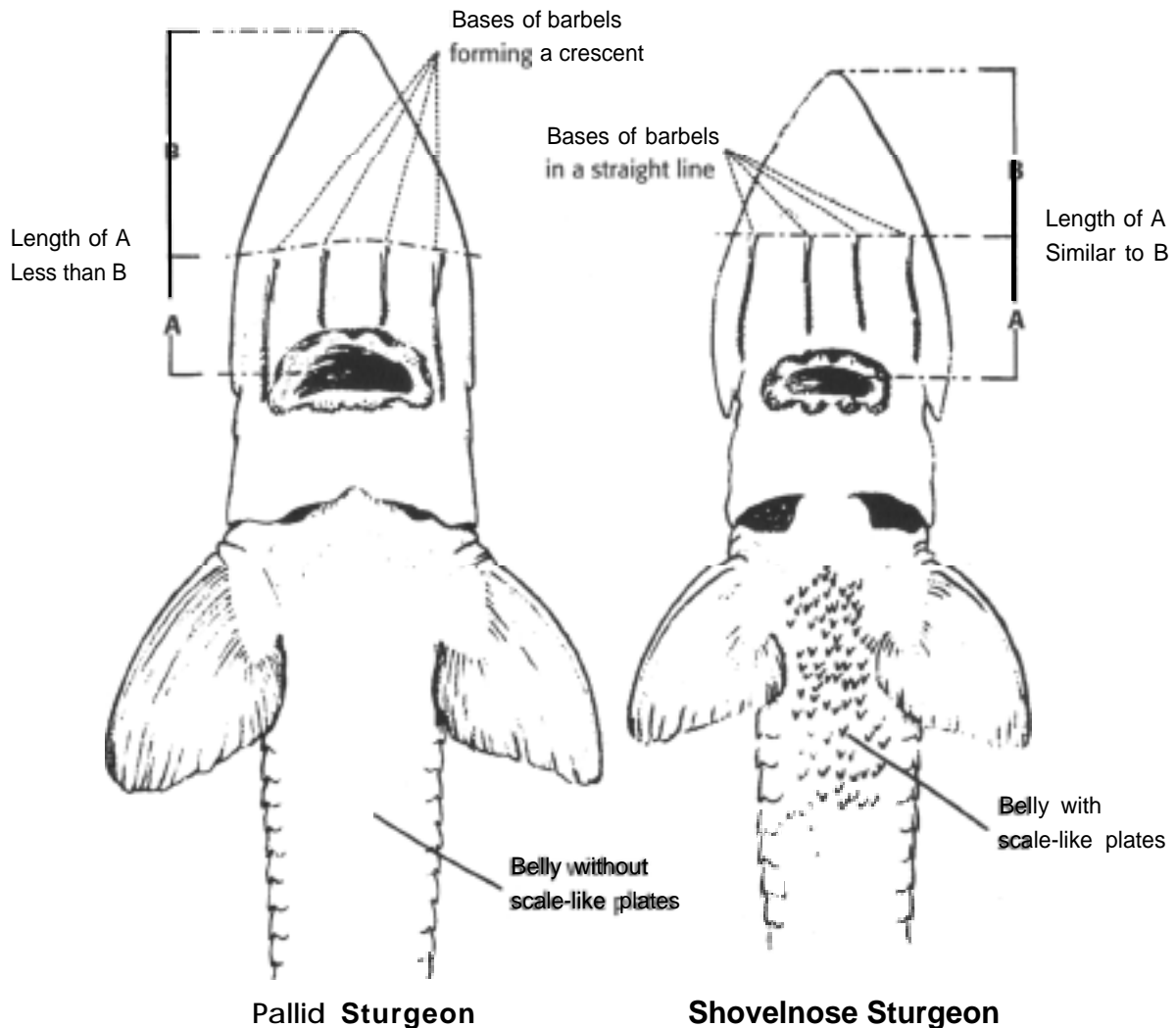
Pallid Sturgeon



Shovelnose Sturgeon



Characteristics for Separating the Two Species of River Sturgeon



- **Pallid Sturgeon** (also known as white sturgeon, white shovelnose or white hackleback) has been found in the Missouri River and in the Mississippi from the mouth of the Illinois River downstream. It is very rare. The pallid sturgeon occasionally reaches 10 pounds or more, but on the average is much smaller than the lake sturgeon. Although this species looks much like the shovelnose sturgeon, there are three main characteristics that can be used to tell them apart. The pallid sturgeon has a **skin-like scaleless belly**, a longer, flatter snout with the barbels attached closer to the mouth than the tip of the snout, and has **the bases of the inner barbels set somewhat ahead of the bases of the outer barbels**. Its color is usually **grayish-white**.

- **Shovelnose Sturgeon** (also known as brown sturgeon, hackleback, switchtail and sand sturgeon) is found throughout the Missouri and

Mississippi rivers, this is our most common sturgeon. More than 90 percent of the sturgeons caught are shovelnose. It is also the smallest of our sturgeons, rarely exceeding 3 feet in length or 5 pounds. Unlike the pallid sturgeon, barbels are attached midway between the mouth and tip of snout, **the bases of the outer barbels set in line with or ahead of the bases of the inner barbels**, and has **thin scale-like plates on the belly**. The shovelnose sturgeon's color is usually **reddish-brown** or buff.

Anglers are encouraged to report sightings of the lake sturgeon and pallid sturgeon, so that more can be learned of their status. If you catch or sight either of these two fish, please notify:

**Missouri Department of Conservation
1110 South College Avenue
Columbia, MO 65201**